

## BEST PRACTICES FOR REACHING UNCONNECTED HOUSEHOLDS

In addition to exposing the critical role that Internet access plays in keeping communities connected, the pandemic has also been a catalyst for cities to expand their outreach to historically marginalized communities. A significant outcome of this work has been cities developing a greater understanding of their most disadvantaged groups and the need to ensure messaging content and programs that provide social, health, and economic assistance are tailored to these communities.

Cities should apply the same principles to reach unconnected households. By leveraging community resources and engaging trusted messengers and community institutions, it is possible to provide high-quality information and data while responding to the specific context and concerns of the hardest to reach populations.

### #1 UNDERSTAND WHY ADOPTION IS LOW

- Three key barriers stand in the way of widespread broadband adoption for households on the wrong side of the broadband affordability gap.



#### Awareness

Most unconnected households are unaware of federal broadband programs and how they can help them get connected. A recent national survey of low- and lower-middle-income households found that only 25% had heard of the program.<sup>1</sup>

*Low awareness of federal broadband programs*

*Difficulty finding information about service provider low-cost options*

*Confusion about eligibility and how to sign up*



#### Trust

Many unconnected households are concerned about sharing personal information as part of the sign-up process and are skeptical the Affordable Connectivity Program will actually cover the cost of their home broadband connection.

*Skeptical about free services*

*Worried about future or unexpected costs*

*Concerned about sharing personal information for eligibility confirmation*

*Uncertainty about the installation process*



#### Enrollment Challenges

Signing up for the Affordable Connectivity Program can be confusing, requiring households to provide documentation of their income status that many cannot easily access.

*No way to access online sign-up processes*

*Unable to navigate complex sign-up process*

*Long phone wait time to activate service*

*Language barriers*

<sup>1</sup> Digital Connectivity During the Pandemic: A national survey of low- and lower-middle income households, a research partnership between EveryoneOn and John B. Horrigan, PhD, 2021.

- City leaders should also seek to hold events and open a dialogue with community leaders to listen to and respond to feedback from residents.

## **#2 CONVENE A COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER GROUP**

- Local leaders have a deep understanding of local context and should take steps to identify and activate representatives of under-resourced populations who can serve as local ambassadors and share information about the Affordable Connectivity Program.
- These trusted messengers and influencers should include:
  - Community-based organizations
  - Community leaders
  - Faith leaders
  - School district leaders
  - Libraries
  - Community health centers

## **#3 CREATE A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

- Assess the available communication channels and reach of community leaders and organizations (e.g., newsletters, calling campaigns, events, social media, in-person meetings, etc.)
- Create a written communications plan with specific dates for outreach activities. Ensure your plan identifies:
  - Audience/ populations you intend to reach
  - Language or translation needs
  - Communication channels you will utilize
  - Timing of your activity (start and end dates)
  - Content required to deliver your activity (e.g., copy, images)
  - Responsible persons
- Follow-up regularly with your stakeholder group, set recurring meetings to solicit feedback, share successes and opportunities for improvement.

## **#4 LAUNCH GENERAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

- Leverage our press release, social media kit, and FAQs to let people know exactly what the ACP is, how they sign-up and how to find internet plans.
- Keep messages simple, clear, and actionable. Explain the importance of getting online and the difference that having a home internet connection can make in their lives.
- Ensure that all communications are community-specific, multilingual, and clearly outline the steps necessary to get online.

- Take a multi-channel approach to outreach (e.g., paper, digital, phone, and in-person). Remember to meet residents where they are at by leveraging partner channels to reach key populations.
- Always use clear, unambiguous language to educate and answer common concerns, including those about eligibility, hidden costs, and use of personal data.

## #5 ACTIVATE TRUSTED MESSENGERS

- Equip trusted messengers with talking points, ACP FAQs, and promotional materials that enable them to easily share key information.
- Ensure messengers can confidently respond to objections and help community members navigate questions about eligibility and enrollment.
- Invest in local, frequent, and ongoing engagement from trusted messengers and organizations that are already actively engaged in the community.
- Provide platforms for community messengers to engage the public. This can be through city channels, joint events, or local media opportunities.
- Ensure local television, news, and radio media have a complete list of available spokespeople and their contact information.

## #6 BUILD CAPACITY TO SUPPORT ACP ENROLLMENT

- Direct residents and community partners to experts and resources. If households need to talk to someone about eligibility or application status, they can call the **ACP Support Center at (877) 384-2575**.
- Organize and implement ACP enrollment events and workshops that assist community members with signing up for the Affordable Connectivity Program and subscribing to internet service. Establish and share a calendar of these events and include ways to incentivize attendance e.g. a meal, food distribution or device giveaways.
- Co-create solutions with community leaders, who are often best-placed to offer effective fixes that will work best for the groups they represent.
- Share stories that show how previously skeptical or concerned residents have been positively impacted by ACP enrollment.